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ABSTRACT

Findings of two studies on the relationship between principal and school effectiveness are presented in this paper. The first part describes a study that examined the perceptions of three constituent groups concerning school effectiveness. Questionnaires were distributed in 1988 to 132 junior primary and primary school principals and 305 parents in the Northern Administrative Area of the Education Department of South Australia, and to 27 school superintendents in South Australia. A total of 32 parents, 13 principals, and 8 superintendents were interviewed about constraints on school effectiveness, improvement strategies, and parental intervention. The second part outlines the results of a study that reviewed effective practices in the areas of administration, ethos, and culture in a sample of South Australian schools. Data on: (1) management/organization; and (2) ethos/culture, were gathered from 17 and 25 schools, respectively. The final part discusses implications for practice and identifies the following concerns of principal effectiveness: interpersonal skill levels, curriculum delivery, school development planning, and parental participation. One figure is included. Appendices contain a chronology of the restructuring of Australian education departments and study findings. (Contains 31 references.) (LMI)

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Principalship in Turbulent Times

Paper prepared for the
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Principalship in Turbulent Times

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Principalship in Turbulent Times

Abstract

This paper is presented in three major parts. The first section outlines a study that examined examined the perceptions of three constituent groups concerning school effectiveness and ineffectiveness. The second part of the paper outlines the results of effective practice reviews in the area of management and administration and ethos and culture in a sample of South Australian schools. The final section examines the implications for the skilling of principals.

In the school effectiveness study questionnaires based on the literature and on the data generated at a series of nominal group technique meetings with 73 principals were distributed to 132 junior primary and primary school principals, and 305 parents in the Northern Administrative Area of the Education Department of South Australia during the latter part of 1988. In addition twenty seven superintendents of schools in South Australia received a similar questionnaire. Thirty two parents, thirteen principals and eight superintendents were interviewed about constraints on school effectiveness, about strategies that could lead to improvement, and about stimuli for, and the nature of parental interventions at schools. Qualitative techniques were used to analyse and present verbal data.

Seven school effectiveness factors were identified: *Principal as Nexus*, *Cooperative Improvement-Oriented Staff*, *Student Centeredness*, *Facilities and Financial Management*, *Goal Emphasis*, *Parental Support* and *Academic Program Focus*.

Data for the effective practice review in the domain management and organisation were gathered from seventeen schools and in the domain of ethos and culture from a sample of 25 schools. The five aspects of more and less effective practice in each domain are discussed.

The implications from the three sets of data for principals are discussed.

The Setting and the Climate

We are living in a time of rapid change. It is a time of great cultural, economic, socio political and ecological demands. It is also a time when there is a very clear call from employers, parents, students and the general community for greater accountability from publicly funded education systems. The improvement in our ability to communicate; the increased recognition of the fact that the world is a global village; that practices, with appropriate recognition for cultural differences, can be transferred from one part of the globe to the other; and the increased state and federal cooperation in projects of national significance means that many commonly held assumptions are under challenge.

One assumption under challenge is the unique nature of education within any one country. Caldwell (1989) and Macpherson (1989) have shown that the restructuring movement in the various states and territories of Australia closely parallels the major restructuring movements that have taken place in educational systems of major OECD countries.

The restructuring movement has been driven by the perception that educational systems need to become more efficient, more accountable and more responsive to government policies and client needs. There has been large scale adoption of the corporate management approaches from the business sectors with added responsibility being given to schools and an associated expectation of increased emphasis on educational outputs. This emphasis is underscored by the market driven language that is widely used and correspondingly education is increasingly being seen as a service or commodity to be delivered.

Cooperative Initiatives

The increasing awareness of the need for national cooperation in education is evident in the recent establishment of the '*Common and Agreed Goals for Schooling in Australia*'. In 1989, the Ministers for Education from federal, state and territory governments agreed to the national goals and made a strong commitment to improve Australian schooling within a framework of national collaboration. The coordination at the national level is through the auspices of the Australian Education council (AEC). The AEC comprises the Ministers of Education from each of the states, territories and the Commonwealth (The Ministers of Education from New Zealand and Papua and New Guinea are associate members.). In the last few years there has been a significant change in the agenda and a substantial emphasis has been placed on curriculum issues.

Curriculum in now being developed by contract on behalf of all the states. Individual states contract to produce broad frameworks for adoption by other states and territories. There has been an agreement to explore the issues surrounding student assessment and to develop uniform mechanisms for national reporting. In the areas of mathematics, science, technology, English language/literacy and studies of society, national curriculum statement production is under way.

Effective Schools

Before the current wave of educational restructuring in Australia each of the states or territories used direct mechanisms to indicate what the system thought an effective school to be. By and large this was through an inspectorate system where schools were assessed in terms of the quality of the program being offered to students. A secondary but important function of the inspectorate was to appraise individuals for their readiness to assume school leadership positions. This was a quality control process for assuring the directions being undertaken by the system.

The inspectorate process focussed on student outputs and sought reliable ways to identify persons who would assist the system change and improve. As indicated by Cuttance (1991, p. 2) these systems were not

> primarily designed to *insure* quality outcomes. They attempt to 're-work' defective 'goods' through such processes as retaining students until they have reached a particular standard or by the non certification of some students. In terms of quality control, uncertified students, that is those who leave school without any formal credentials, are a parallel in the education system to defective goods produced by a manufacturer and sold as 'seconds'. The manufacturer does not stamp such goods with their (quality) label. The existence of such lines of products from manufacturers is usually a symptom of poor quality management.

However, these control systems are disappearing as part of the restructuring process. Australian education systems are moving to establish mechanisms by which a school or its community can judge effectiveness through quality assurance mechanisms.

Devolved systems require quality assurance systems because they do not have the recourse to centralised administrative systems. Devolution moves decisions on the operation of schooling much closer to schools.

South Australia, and nearly every other state, has restructured and down sized its central bureaucracy and moved more operation responsibility to schools (Appendix 1. gives a recent chronology of the restructuring of Australian state education departments.).

The essence of the argument put forward for a devolved system is:

- management should be provided with the authority and responsibility to get on with the task of managing
- the length of the chain of command must be shortened
- the system must be driven by a focus on quality and outcome performance.

Most systems within Australia require that schools undertake some form of strategic planning. The time frame that the school is expected to operate within varies across the states and territories. However, within the parameters of systemic expectations, it is a general requirement that the individual schools clearly indicate the outcomes which they wish to achieve, the timelines associated with achievement and the processes that will be used to monitor and review attainment of the stated outcomes.

The generation of a school vision is a common first step in a strategic planning exercise. However, each person has a personal understanding of what to them constitutes and effective school. These perceptions are of importance to principals managing strategic planning processes. The next section of the paper outlines a 1988 study into parent, principal and superintendent perceptions of factors associated with effective schools.

Overview of a School Effectiveness Study

This study was conducted to probe the factors associated with the effectiveness of schools and of principals. A review of the literature and a series of meetings using the nominal group technique that were held with principals served as bases for the development of questionnaires for parents and principals within one administrative area of the South Australian Education Department and for superintendents from the entire

state of South Australia. Thirty-two parents, thirteen principals and eight superintendents participated in follow-up interviews; these permitted important findings to be further examined.

Numerical data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques; frequency distributions, means, standard deviations, varimax factor analysis, Pearson correlation coefficients, cross tabulations and linear regression analysis. Interview data and open-ended questionnaire responses provided valuable additional information about important dimensions of effectiveness and ineffectiveness and about interventions made by parents. Content analysis of open-ended questionnaire responses was supplemented with detailed recording, and where appropriate, quotation of individual interview responses.

Each group of respondents was asked to rate the importance of each item, of a 79-item questionnaire on a four-point scale, for principal effectiveness or school effectiveness, and to rate the overall effectiveness of the principal and the school. The forty most important items identified by parents and principals as being descriptive of an effective school were used in a varimax factor analysis to determine a seven factors solution for the underlying factors that describe school effectiveness. The seven factors were named Principal as Nexus, Cooperative Improvement-Oriented Staff, Student Centeredness, Facilities and Financial Management, Goal Emphasis, Parental Support, and Academic Program Focus.

Discussion of Findings

The findings from this study raise important questions about school effectiveness and principal effectiveness, particularly in the context of previous research. This section examines the issues raised and insights to be gained from this study.

School Effectiveness

Parents, principals and superintendents rated schools as moderately to highly effective in both an overall sense and across a wide variety of variables with parents consistently rating the effectiveness of principals above the ratings principals gave to their own effectiveness. This is in marked contrast to a study by Johnson (1988) who reported that principals in Alberta always rated their own performance higher than all other respondents when assessing their personal effectiveness. His study also indicated that the most important aspect for school effectiveness was "maintaining an appropriate school climate" and this was also the aspect that had the highest levels of effectiveness. Data gathered within this study indicated that parents and principals were in agreement that the most important aspects for school effectiveness were principal two-way channels of communication with all staff, closely followed by the degree of trust between principal/deputy principal and the rest of the staff.

The literature on school effectiveness has exhibited an array of criteria and problems for judging school and principal effectiveness, but as Bossert (1988) indicated, these

> problems do not suggest that the findings from the effectiveness studies should be ignored. The cumulative evidence, as well as the practical experience of educators, supports the importance of having high expectations for students, developing a positive climate, improving instruction and demonstrating leadership. These are necessary but probably not sufficient elements for effective schools. (cited in Grady, Wayson, & Zirkel, 1989, p. 21).

Data generated by this study indicated that effective schools were seen by respondents to have the following common factors: *Principal as Nexus*, *Cooperative Improvement-Oriented Staff*, *Student Centeredness*, *Facilities and Financial Management*, *Goal Emphasis*, *Parental Support*, and *Academic Program Focus*. The aspects of each factor are shown in Appendix 2.

The importance attached to each school effectiveness factor varied with the constituency identifying the effectiveness level of a school. Parent predictors for judgements about overall school effectiveness were the factors *Student Centeredness*, *Cooperative Improvement-Oriented Staff*, *Facilities and Financial Management* and *Goal Emphasis*, while principals gave emphasis to the *Principal as Nexus*, *Goal Emphasis*, and *Facilities and Financial Management*. Superintendent predictors of overall school effectiveness were *Parental Support* and *Principal as Nexus*. This reiterates the importance that should be given to Cameron's (1980) six critical questions when judging school effectiveness. His second question, "whose perspective, or which constituency's point of view is being considered?" (p. 75) is therefore crucial. Given the movement within Australian schools for increased parental involvement in the highest levels of school management decision making, these findings are significant. Parents are becoming more involved in the management of schools and the findings of this study indicate that they bring a different perspective to the decision-making processes.

Principal as Nexus

Leithwood (1982) claimed that only a small amount was known about the program-specific behaviour of effective principals and that "large critical components of effective behaviour are still to be discovered" (p. 31). However, the many exploratory studies on effective principals have identified a number of characteristics of effective principals. Bossert et al. (1982) collapsed these into four dimensions; (a) emphases on the formulation and achievement of goals; (b) coordination of programs, discipline, evaluation, staff development and other activities; (c) use of human relations skills to approve success and foster teachers' growth, morale and commitment; and, (d) exercise of influence in instructional decision making.

Few studies of principal leadership conducted to date have been able to detect a direct impact on student learning despite the consensus among researchers, policy makers and practitioners that principals "make a difference" in the quality of schooling (see reviews conducted by Bossert et al., 1982; Bridges, 1982; Glassman, 1987, 1984; Hallinger and Murphy, 1985; Leithwood, 1988; Leithwood and Montgomery, 1982).

However, this study identified fifteen specific items associated with the activities of principals in effective schools and all constituent groups identified the factor *Principal as Nexus* as an important indicator of principal effectiveness. Within this factor there were items with emphases on the communication skills of the principal; the

principal modelling learning and being actively involved with curriculum activities within the school; maintaining high expectations of staff, providing feedback to staff and improving their work; maintaining an open school climate; the ability of the principal to declare a personal set of goals for the school; and, the principal giving recognition to the uniqueness of the individual school community.

The communication abilities of principals were seen by all constituents to be important. Superintendents and principals agreed that they were base skills that were required if other higher-level activities were to be successful. This is in accord with the work by Gronn (1983) that showed that talk is central to the work of a principal. It is congruent with Hodgkinson (1978, p. 204) who said "language is the basic administrative tool." Talk is the vehicle through which control is generated and must be worked at consistently and continuously. Language has power and cloaks the use of power (Hodgkinson, 1978), and it is through persistent articulation of a vision for the school that principals influence those around them to subscribe to the vision.

The ability of a principal to declare a personal set of goals was seen to be very important by each respondent group. Principals and superintendents indicated that the principal's ability to do this was the catalyst for the resultant generation of a vision for a school. Vision is but part of the culture of a school and it is through the management of culture that the principal engenders cohesiveness for all participants. Deal and Kennedy (1982) indicated that symbols keep alive the spirit of the goals and help keep people focussed. The modelling done by the principal within a school is part of that symbolism. Principals through their own learning indicate to all staff that the learning of adults within a school is important. It provides a spur for staff themselves to keep current with developing knowledge and trends. The involvement of the principal in the curriculum activities within the school reinforces the importance of this aspect of the school's operation. Parents wanted to see the principals with a high profile in the activities of the school, with a current knowledge of new teaching methods, and with a preparedness to try new ideas and methods. They rated the latter two items as the tenth and twelfth most important items out of the 40 items used for the school effectiveness scale. Superintendents thought that if principals were actively involved in a personal learning program then they could be more persuasive in articulating high expectations to staff. High expectations as a variable has been consistently related to school effectiveness. Wimpleberg's (1988) contention, as the result of a study in Louisiana, is that expectations are part of the personality and belief systems or the people within a school and as such form part of the cultural dimension of a school. This is in accord with the effective schools literature where, specifically, high expectations refer to a climate where the staff expects students to do well, believes that students can do well, believes in its ability to influence student achievement and accepts responsibility for student achievement. All constituent groups were of the opinion that the principal's high expectations were of paramount importance for generating staff high expectations and formed part of the culture of an individual school.

The principal's reinforcement of the school's culture by modelling learning, maintaining high expectations for all staff, and communicating these expectations is in accord with the work by Little (1982) and Shoemaker & Fraser (1981), both cited in Johnson (1988, p. 57). Little (1982) also maintained that the principals of effective

schools stressed and fostered collegiality. This was emphasised by people interviewed during the study and was indicative of their concern for the development of teamwork for the achievement of school goals.

The maintenance of an open climate within a school was an aspect of the factor *Principal as Nexus*. Murphy et al. (1985) stated that within the effective schools literature framework, climate has three components:

> (1) important norms that guide behaviour, for example, high expectations for performance and staff accountability for student performance; (2) organisational processes that help the school community to carry out important work, for example shared decision-making and open communications; and (3) structures that reinforce and/or provide the context for quality instruction, for example discipline procedures and systems for involving students in school activities. (p. 366)

The first of their three points is a specific item under the factor *Principal as Nexus* while the latter two are components of the factors *Cooperative Improvement-Oriented Staff* and *Student Centeredness*. Climate was seen to be an important component of the factor *Principal as Nexus* and parents linked an open school climate with the approachability of the principal and staff. Principals and superintendents thought that trust levels between the principal and staff were an indicator of an open climate and both groups thought that a school should be a happy productive place where both students, staff and parents feel welcome. It was seen by all constituent groups that "happy teachers produced happy students" and this was of importance to all because student happiness and morale was of high concern. Student unhappiness quickly energised parents to contact a teacher or principal within a school or a superintendent, seeking rectification of the cause of the student's unhappiness.

The factor *Principal as Nexus* has an emphasis on the management and reinforcement of the culture of a school. It is in line with the theoretical approach proposed by Sergiovanni (1984) where a focus on cultural forces is associated with excellence in schooling. Within his model of leadership and excellence in schooling Sergiovanni proposed that the cultural or "High priest" principal has the base skills required of the technical, human, educational and symbolic leaders. These leadership constructs included communication skills; an ability to generate a cohesive group; staff supervisory skills; professional knowledge and management skills; the ability to model personal learning processes and provide staff in-service; presence within the classrooms and an ability to provide a unified vision. These are all components of the factor *Principal as Nexus* and as such the findings lend support to Sergiovanni's proposal. When these listed component skills and activities are present the leader can focus on generating the culture of the school so that people within the school become believers of the school as an ideological system. This belief becomes highly motivating for all of the members of the school community. A central purpose, vision and goals were seen by all constituents as extremely important for principal effectiveness and therefore, by implication, for school effectiveness.

Cooperative Improvement-Oriented Staff

The nine items within the factor *Cooperative Improvement-Oriented Staff* indicate the importance placed upon facets of the activities of staff, the majority of parents and principals rated staff performance within the factor as highly or extremely effective.

Principal and superintendent responses gave the item, teachers engaged in school-focussed professional development activities for the improvement of the school, the highest effectiveness level within this factor. All constituent groups reinforced the importance of a staff development program during interviews. Parents saw it as a way to ensure that their children were taught by competent teachers with current professional knowledge. Parents saw that demonstrated ongoing learning by teachers was a professional responsibility. Principals and superintendents also saw that teachers required a personal professional development program that focussed on addressing areas of weakness while capitalising on areas of strength. Both agreed that the maintenance of such a program was an important component of the principal's role. The focus on staff development that emerged during the study was in accordance with Purkey and Smith's (1983) review of effective schools research, where staff development was one of the nine structural variables associated with school effectiveness.

Student Centeredness

Student Centeredness emerged as the first predictor used by parents when assessing the overall effectiveness of a school and was ranked by both principals and superintendents as the second highest effectiveness mean among the seven school effectiveness factors. Only one item within this factor, a student behaviour management program, was identified by the Purkey and Smith (1983) review of school effectiveness research. Within this factor parents, principals and superintendents were concerned with the processes used by schools to assess and report on students' work. Schools were seen by all groups to be much more effective in reporting to parents than in their ability to give feedback and report student progress to students. Given that parents, principals and superintendents see academic attainment and progress for students while at school as one of the major purposes of school, the perception of lesser effectiveness with staff in giving feedback to students should be of concern to staff. Irrespective of this, one third of the parents interviewed expressed concern with the processes used by schools. Parents consistently spoke of (1) the lack of specific information given to them by teachers particularly when they were proposing special remedial action for individual students, and (2) the lack of sufficient time for parent-teacher interviews when they were conducted.

Along with academic attainment, student morale and satisfaction were also seen by parents to be linked to the social interactions students had with their teachers and peers. Concerns in this domain quickly energised parents to contact the classroom teacher or the principal of the school seeking resolution of the perceived problem.

Goal Emphasis

Goal Emphasis was a predictor of overall school effectiveness for principals and parents. Johnson & Snyder (1985) and Rosenholtz (1985) have emphasised the necessity for a collaborative approach for goal development and this is a feature of this factor. The concept of collaboration for setting goals had very high agreement from all people interviewed. Chapman (1986) found that six of the top ten factors which had a positive perceived level of influence on the effectiveness of Victorian primary school principals were associated with collaborative, participatory approaches to decision

making and management. In accordance with the research cited above, all constituents saw that the principal was responsible for managing the goal setting process and the principal's personal articulation of goals for the school was part of instigating the process and indicated a commitment for the establishment of such goals. All saw that the achievement of goals required team work. Purkey and Smith (1983) in their review of school effectiveness research identified four cultural variables; (a) collegial relationships and collaborative work; (b) a sense of community; (c) clearly defined goals and high expectations; and, (d) a sense of order and discipline with little noise, distraction and risk. It can be seen that the first three are supported by the processes within the *Goal Emphasis* factor and reinforced by all constituent groups during the interviews. However, each group's responses to questionnaire items indicated that this factor was either the least effective or second least effective aspect of the operation of schools.

Academic Program Focus

Within the factor *Academic Program Focus* there were emphases on the development of social relationships, the development of student creativity, and the coordination of program continuity. Neither parents nor principals placed an equally high emphasis on two other questionnaire items, students encouraged to strive for academic success and emphasis on academic attainment, and these two items were not in the forty most important items for school effectiveness. This was in marked contrast to much of the literature on effective schools where there is an emphasis on academic attainment. The social relationships that students have with their peers and the nature of the relationship between teacher and students was of prime importance to parents. Concerns in this area quickly motivated parents to contact the classroom teacher or the principal. If the issue was not addressed to their satisfaction they then sought the assistance of the superintendent for help in resolving the issue.

Parental Support

Though Purkey and Smith (1983) found little evidence to support its inclusion, they added parent support as one of the nine structural variables associated with effective schools. Chapman (1986) found, in a survey of 100 primary school principals within Victoria, that increasing parental participation in schools was the factor with the most positive perceived level of influence on the effectiveness of a primary principal. Six of the first ten factors she identified, that had positive perceived influence on the effectiveness of primary principals, related to changed emphases between principals and parents. All constituent groups in this study saw that increased levels of parental participation in the management of schools were desirable. This indicates a move towards greater parental control of education. Cullingford (1985) argued that discussions about the level of parental participation are really discussions about control. The increased parental participation in all phases of decision making within the management of schools will inevitably lead to a diminishing of the buffers that have traditionally protected the core technology of the school, the teaching processes within the classrooms. This may lead to challenges of the staff about the methodologies that they employ. As one superintendent indicated, "if a school hasn't got its curriculum management together, increased parental participation could be

counter productive and lead to staff feeling threatened." However, it is not just the local school that may come under pressure. Some of the premises used by management personnel of a school district as the basis for decision making, particularly those associated with school closures, could come under attack.

The major area of difference in perceptions about the nature and degree of the parental participation was in the area of curriculum management. Principals were sensitive to parent participation in this area and cited the possible devaluing of teacher expertise. Principals thought only a minority of parents wished to participate in curriculum decision making while the majority of parents indicated that they wanted to participate in broad curriculum guideline decision making but leave the specific content to the trained professionals. The differences in perceptions about the appropriateness and willingness for involvement could produce tensions.

Under the factor *Parental Support* there was common agreement about the differences between parental involvement and parental participation. Involvement implied that parents were a resource to be used for activities within the school, to be consulted with when decision were to be made but not necessarily playing a major part in the final decision making. Participation was seen to extend to parents being considered as equal partners in the decision-making processes. Meyer, Scott and Deal (1983) proposed that schools live or die according to their conformity to environmental rules rather than to particular output demands. By implication therefore schools need to keep their environmental constituencies happy and as such schools are most sensitive to dissidence and dissatisfaction. If parent organisations and Education Departments continue to actively promote increased parental participation in the management of schools then principals could come under pressure from their local parents. Parents interviewed readily discussed their perception that their level of participation was dictated by the attitudes of the principals and staff. It will soon be seen by parents that the rejection of their increased participation by some principals is in conflict with the stated policy. However, the principals are the "street level bureaucrats" responsible for the implementation of policy concerning parental participation and will determine the form of the implemented policy. The perceptions of parents and principals conflict and this could have implications for the development of parental participation in the management of schools as currently proposed by Education Departments.

Payne (1987) in his study of parent control of principal work behaviour in Alberta found that the effects of parental influence could be seen in principal behaviour. From an analysis of his data he extracted fifty-four propositions but indicated that a major weakness of the study was a lack of data from parents. Data gathered from parents in this study reinforce and extend some of his propositions. Four in particular are of importance as systems move to increase the level of parental participation in schooling.

- Proposition 4. Parents are exerting influence across a wider range of school operations, but the influence is less acceptable to organisational participants in core teaching and personnel matters.

The discussion above supports this contention and it is the basis for the difference in perception about the appropriate level of participation in the curriculum management area.

- Proposition 19. The principal is of importance to, and responsible for, the school.
- Proposition 20. Parents regard the principal as, in effect, the school.

Parents consistently articulated the importance of the principal's responsibility for the school and non-effectiveness in many areas of school performance was seen to indicate an ineffective principal. When commenting on the relationship between principal effectiveness and school effectiveness parents were emphatic that it was a very strong positive correlation and this could be summarised by the parent who said "many statements about the school are really statements about the principal."

- Proposition 26. The principal decides how much influence parents will have in the school.

Parents indicated that in spite of the policy for increased parental participation, the actual level of their participation was dictated by the attitude of the principal and staff. Where parents saw that their input was valued and acted upon the level of participation quickly increased. However, where principals articulated the importance of parental participation but their actions were not congruent with this, the level of genuine participation was low.

Facilities and Financial Management

There were three items within this factor. Two related to the maintenance of the internal and external environment of the school while the third concerned the processes used to establish a school budget.

Superintendent and principal responses indicated that schools were given higher effectiveness ratings on this factor than any other.

All superintendents thought that the school budget should be set with the involvement of parents and staff, while 91% of principals and 88% of parents expressed the same opinion. Principals rated their effectiveness for the development of a school budget equally as high as their effectiveness in communicating with all staff. Both items had higher means than the means for any other of the 40 items in the seven school effectiveness factors. Though 61% of parents ranked the school's performance as highly effective or extremely effective, this mean value ranked twelfth among parents' ratings across the 40 items.

There was a common perception among all three groups concerning what a school should look like and it was a factor parents considered when making choices about a school for their children to attend. All wanted the school to be neat and tidy with the grounds and buildings indicating care and attention to detail, and 93% of parents thought that the schools were moderately, highly or extremely effective at this. All persons interviewed wanted the interior of the school to be bright and colourful with the work of children displayed. Most thought this indicated pride in the work of the children while superintendents suggested that the display of children's work reminded visitors of the purpose of schools. Parents and superintendents thought that the manner of the front office staff was a critical component in reinforcing or negating the positive first impressions generated by a bright foyer and well cared-for grounds.

Summary

The findings of this study add support to many of the factors identified by Purkey and Smith's (1983) review of effective schools research. However, the identification of the seven school effectiveness factors provides a focus for, and emphasis on the activities undertaken by principals and staff in effective schools.

The premises against which school effectiveness judgements were made by each constituent group were not specified (e.g., reading attainment at specified ages). Rather the position was taken, as was the case with Johnson's (1988) study in Alberta, that many effectiveness criteria are only subjectively assessable and the judgements made are dependent upon the circumstances, the constituency and the individuals whose perceptions are sought. Concomitant with this is the idea that it is better to provide practitioners, principals and superintendents, with tools for gauging and improving school effectiveness rather than a specified master plan for action. These tools, the seven school effectiveness factors, for improving effectiveness include the knowledge of important dimensions and the task areas within each dimension plus their own and others' assessment of current performance.

Since the study was conducted the Education Review Unit in South Australia has developed a process for gathering data about effective practice within schools in four domains of schooling. The data provided by these reviews provides additional information about practice in schools.

Effective Practice Reviews

The Education Review Unit in South Australia has established a system of gathering data on four domains of effective practice. Data from reviews conducted in 1990 in two of the domains, Ethos and Culture and Management and Organisation is presented. The data from reviews conducted in 1991 is presented in Appendix 3.

The recording of information for the domains is carried out by the Review Teams which visit schools for individual school reviews. These Review Teams comprise of three to five individuals who visit a school for two to five days. One domain of the effective practice indicators is addressed in each school, as part of the systemic review in that school. The majority of the time and resources in an individual review in a school are, however, devoted to the review of that school's development plan.

The recording of information indicates whether that effective practice is: observed as an integral and embedded part of the practice in an individual school; whether it is part of the practice that is observed in an individual school, but perhaps not observed throughout the school; whether it is not part of the practice observed in an individual school but is addressed as an area for development within that school, as indicated by the school's projected development program; or whether that practice is neither observed in that school nor indicated to be part of the forward planning for development in that school.

This four-category reporting system provides the information which the education system requires for two purposes. Firstly, to establish whether or not particular key practices are already embedded in the practice of schools and therefore are not required to be addressed through further development and support work, and secondly, whether they are areas of practice which schools are either in the process of addressing or plan to address in the near future, and therefore are candidates for additional development and implementation resources.

Management and Organisation

The analysis in this domain is based on information collected in a random sample of 17 schools. More than half of these were found to match the descriptions of the effective practice criteria either *very closely* or *fairly closely* for one or more of 17 of the 30 aspects reviewed.

Highly Effective Practices

Grounds, Facilities and Equipment

No school in the sample was assessed as being ineffective in this aspect of effective practice. Eighty per cent of schools were assessed to match the criteria *very closely* or *fairly closely*. This is an aspect of schools where most have effective school council and or staff sub-committees that regularly report on grounds development and maintenance and on financial activity within the school.

Inclusive Student Program

The indicator statement for this aspect is of a general character and many of the individual factors within the aspect are explored in more detail in the domain of equal opportunity and social justice. In 75 per cent of schools the difference between individual students is recognised and valued. Enrolment is open to students regardless of cultural or linguistic background, physical or intellectual impairment (save those directed by the Director-General of Education to attend a special purpose school/unit) and processes to provide access to appropriate support are operative.

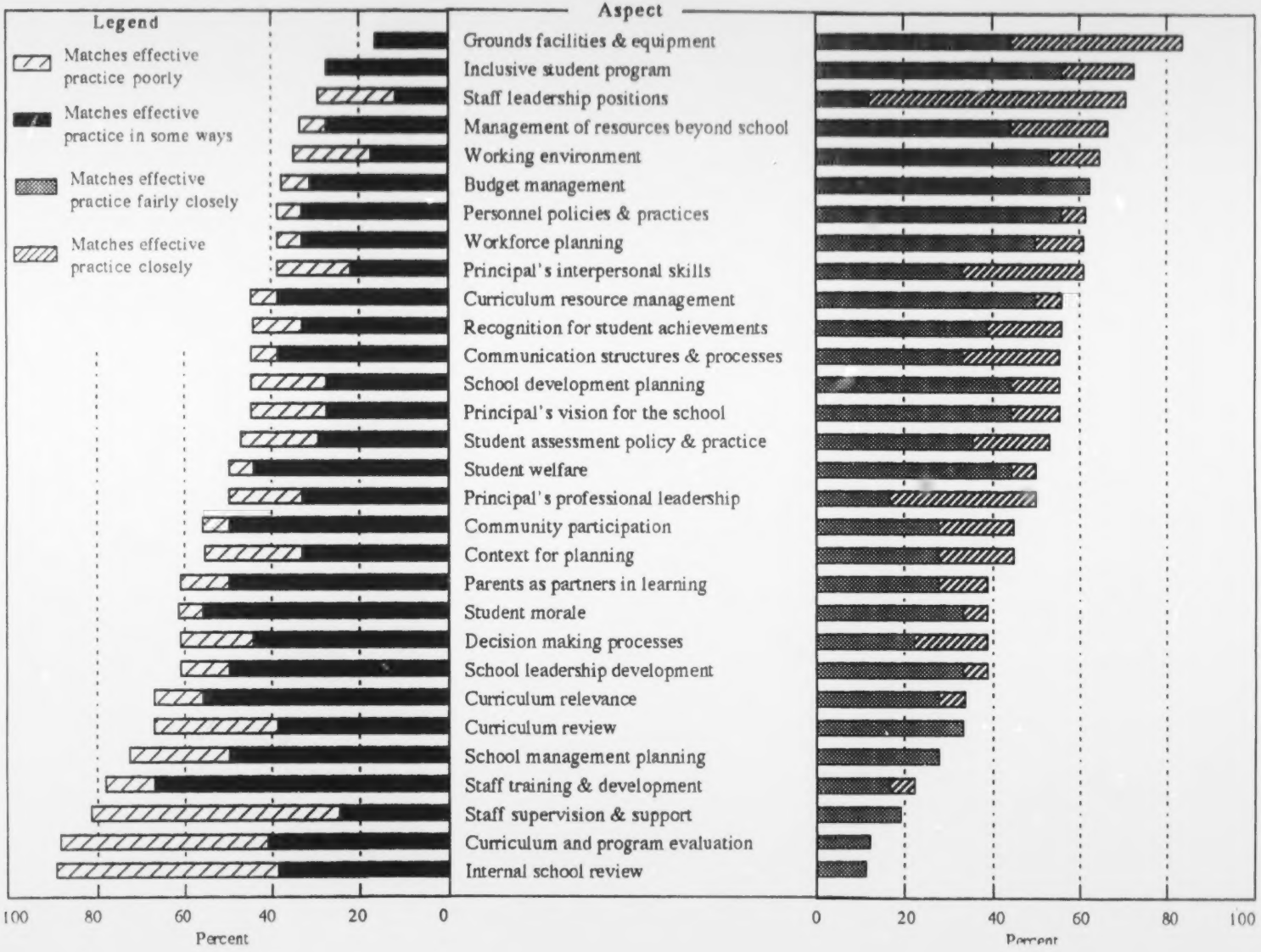
Staff Leadership Positions

The practice matched the criteria for effective practice either *very closely* or *fairly closely* in 70 per cent of schools. Leadership positions had been allocated to meet the objectives of the school development plan. However, the success of the training and development to achieve planned objectives is discussed below as one of the less effective practices in schools.

Management of Resources Beyond the School

The education program is planned sufficiently in advance so that members of the school community are aware of approaching events, costs and the organisational requirements in 60 per cent of schools. In these schools the principal is aware of Education Department processes, has an effectively functioning network of appropriate resource contacts, and uses this network to the school's advantage.

Figure 1 Assessment of schools on the various aspects of practice in the Management and Organisation domain (1990)



Working Environment

Staff show high self–esteem and work collaboratively to achieve high standards in 60 per cent of schools, taking responsibility for the success or failure of their projects. Effective co-operation between staff is clearly evident.

Practices Requiring Development

Internal School Review

The lowest degree of effectiveness was evident for this aspect of practice. School development planning is currently in its implementation phase, and many schools have little experience in conducting internal school reviews. By the end of 1991 it is expected that all schools will have conducted an internal review as part of the roll-forward of their school development plan. This experience will provide the basis for ongoing learning and subsequent improvement in practice. Support for schools in managing internal review processes would appear to be highly desirable. This assessment is strongly supported by the review of support for school development planning.

Curriculum and Program Evaluation

No school was assessed as having matched the effective practice criteria very *closely* or *fairly closely*. This assessment is consistent with the information provided by the review of the Curriculum Authority and Responsibility policy. The inclusion in the criteria of the statement "staff are continuously involved in reviewing classroom programs and practices" indicates the high level of total school involvement that is required in this aspect of practice. A high degree of trust is necessary before staff feel comfortable with the involvement of peers in the assessment of their classroom practice.

Staff Supervision and Support

No school matched the criteria of effective practice *very closely*. The key features of this aspect are a school supervision and support policy, with encouragement to try different options, and the linking of staff supervision to the achievement of school development objectives. The reviews noted that school staff are waiting for the development of the Education Department's policy on performance appraisal before developing school–based practices. The Department's policy should be developed at an early opportunity. The current standard of practice indicates that major training and development will be required, as the base level of practice is weak and provides little to build on.

Staff Training and Development

Sixty five per cent of the observed practice matched the criteria for effective practice *in some respects* only. Although appointments are being made to the new leadership positions they are not yet resulting in widespread effective change. The successful implementation of change requires multiple strands within the school's training and development program. An essential component of an effective training and development program is knowledge of individual teacher performance by the school's leadership staff. This is required to facilitate counselling, to increase skills for effective

operation of schools, for improved learning outcomes for students and for enhancing prospects for career advancement. The assessment above of weak practice in the aspect of staff supervision and support corroborates this diagnosis of the problems in this aspect of practice.

School Management Planning

The weak assessments for this aspect are congruent with the large number of recommendations relating to decision making and management processes made in school review reports. There may have been a lessening of emphasis in some schools on general management activities as a consequence of the recent increase in emphasis on school development planning. Effective principals continue to manage curriculum maintenance and renewal but others are not consistently giving their attention to these management necessities.

Summary

The performance of management in the use of resources beyond the direct school environment and of buildings and grounds is highly effective in most schools. Aspects of management relating to staffing and students are performed effectively in more than half of all schools. Some specific aspects of general management—particularly those relating to decision making, staff training and development, and the supervision and support of staff—require attention in more than 50 per cent of all schools reviewed. Aspects of management relating to school planning—particularly, context setting for planning, school management planning and internal review processes for school development planning—also require early attention in more than half of all schools. There is a weakness across the system in the aspects of curriculum management, curriculum relevance and program evaluation in schools.

Ethos and Culture

The analysis in this domain is based on information gathered in 25 schools. Information was gathered through interviews, selective surveys, perusing school documents and classroom and general school observation.

Highly Effective Practice

Staff Commitment and Morale

There was evidence of strong staff commitment and morale in 80 per cent of schools. This was either directly observable in the practices of the school or clearly demonstrated in the school's planning. There was general recognition within these schools that committed teachers encouraged a correspondingly high level of student commitment. There were clear strategies in place to foster motivation and morale among teachers.

Worksite Atmosphere

Over 75 per cent of schools exhibited a positive climate giving the immediate impression of a human, happy and work-like atmosphere. Displays of student work,

work–in–progress and the ethos of the school's front office were factors contributing to this.

School as a Human Place

Compassion, caring, responsibility and respect were values clearly evident in the practice or planned practice of 75 per cent of schools. Individuality is recognised and encouraged in these schools. Teachers acknowledge each other's values. It was evident that each of these schools had its 'heart' in the right place.

Student Commitment and Morale

Students in over 75 per cent of schools showed a keenness to participate in learning and social activities. Student achievements were recognised within the school culture and students displayed confidence in the school and in the education they received.

Valuing and Respect for People

Sixty five per cent of schools were teaching or planning to teach courses that develop skills in human relations. These courses focus on issues such as assertiveness, self–esteem and protective behaviours.

Practices Requiring Development

The ethos and culture domain contains seven broad areas of effective practice. Two of these, *leadership and management* and *cultural difference* had the majority of instances of less effective practice. Broad findings in relation to five of the areas which require the most attention are presented.

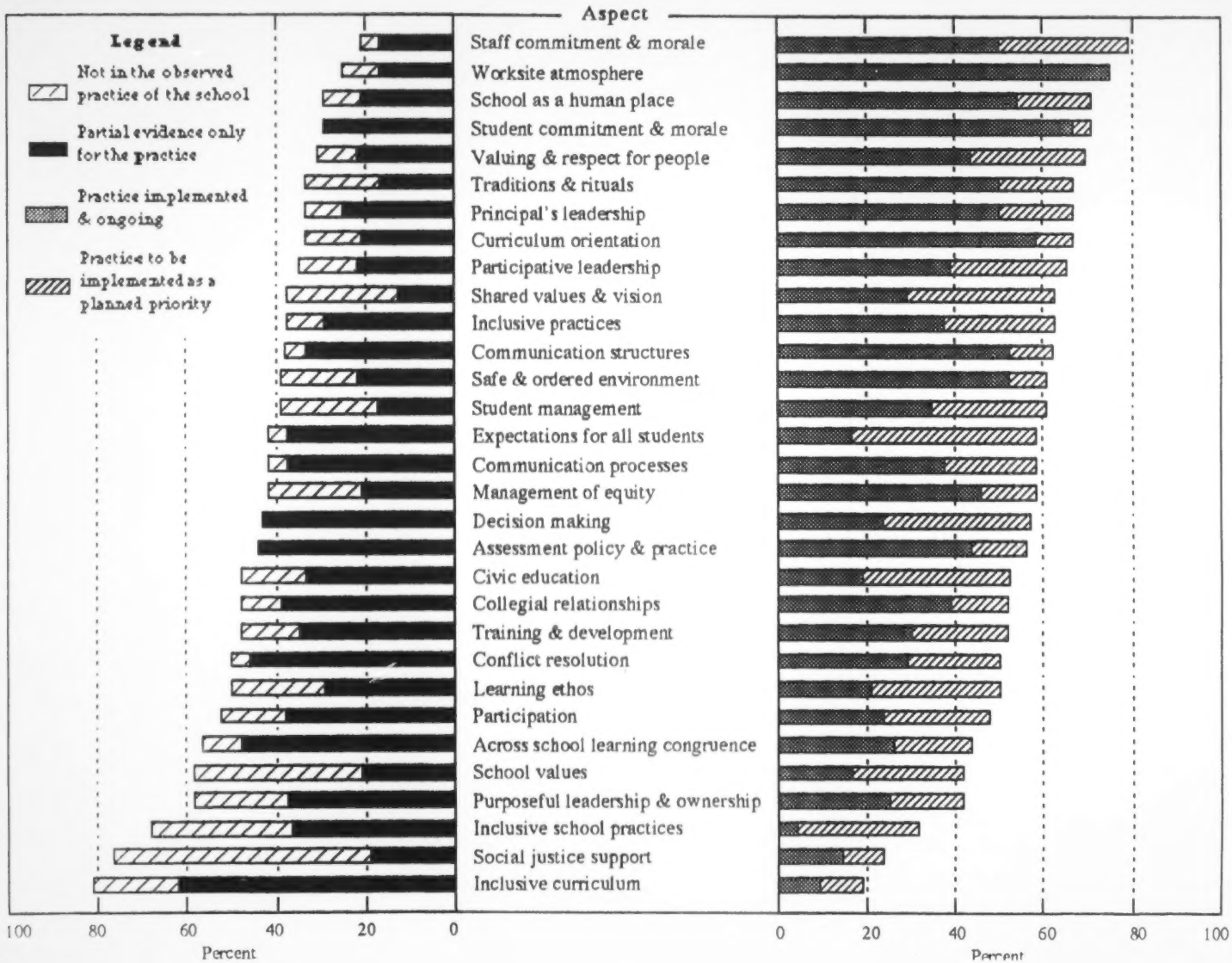
Inclusive Curriculum

Nineteen per cent of schools had a curriculum which included and valued the experiences and backgrounds of the students and the school community, either in practice or in their planned priorities for school development. This small proportion of schools celebrates the social and intellectual richness created by cultural diversity and has training and development programs to support initiatives. They have curriculum structures which ensure access for all students. Such practices were partially evident in 62 per cent of schools while in the other 19 per cent they were not in the observed practice of the school..

Social Justice Support

Twenty five per cent of schools had clearly stated and agreed policies for dealing with potential conflict arising from harassment due to intolerance, sexual or racial harassment. Appropriate organisational structures to enhance the contribution from all groups were in evidence, as well as a process for managing competing claims in a way that ensures opinions are heard and acknowledged. These characteristics were partially evident in 19 per cent of schools, while they were not in the observed practice in 57 per cent of schools.

Figure 2 Assessment of schools on the various aspects of practice in the Ethos and Culture domain (1990)



Inclusive School Practices

General school policies, including decision making processes, which incorporate and recognise the diversity of cultural experience and background in school communities were apparent in the planning or practice of 32 per cent of schools. There was a program for reviewing procedures in these schools to ensure their relevance and effectiveness. There was little evidence of these practices in the remaining 68 per cent of schools.

Purposeful Leadership and Ownership

There was a strong and purposeful climate, aligned with a vision of excellence in schooling which was nurtured and built by those responsible for leadership in 42 per cent of schools. These schools showed evidence of developing and organising leadership positions which supported and encouraged a wide range of participation. A high level of motivation and commitment to bring about or preserve changes needed to improve education was also apparent in these schools. There was little evidence of these practices in the other 58 per cent of schools.

School Values

Publicly agreed core school values which are regularly reviewed were evident in 42 per cent of schools. The remaining 58 per cent of schools showed little or no evidence of encouraging students, parents and the school community to address core values in a locally relevant manner.

Summary

The above analysis of the reviews in the in this domain indicates that in the majority of schools there was a positive sense of self–worth among teachers, parents and students. The majority demonstrated a strong sense of caring, compassion and support for the school community. There was a positive sense of commitment and morale from students and staff in such schools. However, many schools still need to effectively address the issue of establishing management and organisational structures which actively promote inclusive practices to ensure access and support for all groups within the school community.

Across the two domains an analysis indicates that strengths are found in the non-curriculum aspects of schooling but future attention needs to be directed towards curriculum related issues: particularly, planning, maintenance, development and review of curriculum and programs within schools; the organisation and strategies for the effective use within schools of resources to deliver the curriculum, including staff training and development; the management and review of development in schools. There are also a range of non-curriculum issues that require development: particularly those relating to the management and organisational structures and processes to promote equitable and inclusive management of personnel and access to resources and the curriculum for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Implications for Practice

This effectiveness study adds to the considerable literature on school effectiveness, and could appear daunting for practitioners concerned with the improvement of personal as well as school effectiveness. No cookbook approach is offered but the seven school effectiveness factors do indicate the actions and focus for activities of principals and staff within effective schools, as judged by parents, principals and superintendents. The words of Reid, Hopkins, & Holly (1987, p. ii) could give solace to practitioners contemplating actions aimed at improvement. The school effectiveness literature

> is in agreement on two issues. First, positive features of 'effective schools' are to do with process-type manifestations of schooling. . . . The second aspect on which the literature is in agreement is that all of these features are amenable to alteration by concerted action on the part of the school staff.

The following are implications for practice generated by the study and may be of use for persons planning concerted action for improvement in the effectiveness of specific aspects of a school or principal's operations.

Interpersonal Skill Level of Principals

Beyond the generally pleasing finding that parents, principals and superintendents were moderately satisfied with both the effectiveness of principals and schools, a number of implications emerged from the data. The factor *Principal as Nexus* was seen to be crucial to the development of principal effectiveness and within this factor great emphasis was placed by all constituent groups on the interpersonal skills level of the principal. The communication abilities of principals were linked with parental and superintendent concerns about the approachability of principals. They thought that as well as being approachable principals need to be able to listen carefully to parents without becoming defensive, negotiate with all parties involved in the conflict, and ensure that agreed strategies were implemented.

Since the effectiveness study was undertaken nearly all educational systems in Australia have put in place some type of strategic planning process which requires principals to produce public plans for the achievement of stated outcomes. The generation of a school based strategic plan requires that the school develop a succinct statement of purpose or a mission statement. This task necessitates that principals have highly developed skills in the areas of consulting and mediating to successfully manage the collaborative process that will at times produce a list of competing priorities. As the system level delegate principals, during the planning process, are often required to be an advocate for system wide initiatives. This can mean informing participants of why systemic priorities need to be addressed as well as requiring the defence of some priorities.

The expected planning processes have placed an added premium on the level of interpersonal skills held by principals and identified as important in the effectiveness study. *** Given that research is consistently drawing a nexus between principal effectiveness and school effectiveness it would appear to be an unassailable tenant that

educational systems need to give business-like detailed attention to the pre-service training of principals, and the in-service developmental courses available for principals.

However, all respondent groups thought that improving the interpersonal skills level of an individual was extremely difficult and time consuming task and hence the interpersonal skill level of principals and applicants for principalship may be a crucial facet requiring attention in the development of performance appraisal structures and in the selection processes used to appoint principals.

Curriculum Delivery

Of particular concern in the effectiveness study were the demands for courses in increasing principal skills in staff supervisory processes with an emphasis on giving meaningful feedback to staff. This was an area of lesser effectiveness for principals.

Parents, principals and superintendents were concerned about the coordination and continuity of the instructional program between year levels. This area could be the focus of curriculum management courses for principals as well as of concern to the various committees responsible for the generation of curriculum documentation. This concern is matched by the data gathered in the effective practice reviews. An analysis of that data indicated that schools are more effective in non curriculum related areas. The planning , maintenance, development and review of curriculum and programs within schools can be seen to require attention.

Parents, in the effectiveness study, were concerned that their children received an education from competent professionally current teaching staff. This reinforced principal and superintendent perceptions of the importance of staff development programs. It was seen to be essential that such programs have a dual thrust, personal development as well as a total school development focus. This requires the provision of adequate time, which costs money, and hence should be of concern to persons involved in budget formulation. Of further implication to budget planners were the perceptions of all constituent groups for the need to use teacher expertise outside of the classroom for the development and management of a school. This may mean that classroom contact time for teachers may need to change. Since the data was gathered major movement has occurred in job redescription under the banner of award restructuring. However, in schools we have failed to challenge the basic assumptions that underpin the structuring of schools. Shanker (1990), Carroll (1990) and Hart (1989) in the United States and Ashendon (1990) here in Australia have written in this area but have failed to influence key persons in the restructuring movement. The concept of one person (preferably a teacher) consistently reacting with an ever decreasing number of students still reigns supreme.

School Development Planning

All constituent groups in the effectiveness study saw that increased levels of parental participation in thee management of schools were desirable. In terms of school planning all saw the necessity for parents being involved in the process of setting the goals of a school and saw that teamwork was necessary to achieve these school goals. Parents interviewed readily discussed their perception that their levels of participation was dictated by the attitudes of the principal and staff.

Most systems have, since this data was gathered, introduced some form of systemic planning with the associated identification of planned priorities for a three to five year period. Within these systemic plans principals are required to nest their school development plan. However, the expectations being placed upon principals in terms of their management of a school development planning process and the way they need to involve persons in many cases exceeds that which is being modelled by the system.

In the effectiveness study all respondent groups gave low effectiveness ratings to the abilities of schools to focus on goal attainment. This is of concern as departments are increasing emphasis on school development planning for school improvement. This is a move to focus on accountability for achieving stated outcomes. Goal focus, ongoing monitoring of the implementation of strategies to achieve stated outcomes, and internal review processes are crucial management facets in planning for school improvement. The effective practice reviews add further cause for concern as internal review, school management planning and purposeful leadership and management were aspects that require significant development in the majority of schools. Systems need to give attention to this aspect of principal development.

Parental Participation

Increased parental participation in decision making for all aspects of the management of schools were promoted by all groups. However, concerns were expressed by parents and principals about the role parents should play in the area of curriculum management. The differing perception need to be confronted and negotiation occur in relation to parental participation in this area. Education Departments should give cognisance to the fact that principal and staff attitudes were perceived to control the actual level of parental participation. Without addressing this issue the implementation of policy for increased parental participation, may be endangered. The suggestions by numerous principals and parents for in-service activities, jointly sponsored the Education Department and state wide parent bodies, focussed on the parental participation policy appears to be a sound recommendation and worthy of further investigation.

As parental participation increases the traditional mechanisms that have protected the core technology of schools, teaching and learning is coming under increasing scrutiny. One factor that starts to get to this nub and that was of concern to parents in the effectiveness study was the processes used to allocate students to classes. Parents indicated that they give a great deal of attention to the class allocation processes used by schools. If they perceived that a child was split from a friendship group or have some concerns about the person who will be their child's classroom teacher they frequently contacted the school. The principal of one school indicated that parental input is sought prior to the finalisation of class lists. This had the support of staff and has been very effective in diminishing the level of parental concern. It may be a process that would be of benefit to other schools.

The social interactions of children were of great concern to parents and one major facet was the quality of the relationship between child and classroom teacher. When there were problems in this area parents contacted the teacher or the principal seeking a

resolution of the difficulties. Many parents spoke with emotion and evidenced a degree of frustration because they perceived that teachers usually see the students as the cause of the problem and do not acknowledge that they could also be at fault. It may be of advantage for principals to reflect on this matter and give cognisance to parent perceptions when dealing with this issue.

Concluding Remarks

A concept of effectiveness is inherent in every person's mental conception of a school. Whether it is studied or not, parents, administrators and school staff will continue to make formal and informal assessment of a school or school system's performance. As educational systems move to increase the number of players in school based decision making, the lens through which people view school effectiveness will become increasingly important. Principals will increasingly be held accountable for the outcomes of schooling. This means that they will need to be highly skilled in facets of administration previously not within their domain of influence.

Continued research into school effectiveness will give added clarity to the looking glasses used by people. This will facilitate an improvement in the judgements being made and in the efforts being expended to improve the overall effectiveness level of principals and schools.

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Appendices

Appendix1: A Chronology of Restructuring of Australian Education Departments

Year	State or Territory							
	NSW	Victoria	Queensland	South Australia	Western Australia	Tasmania	A.C.T.	Northern Territory
1979	Public Service Act 1979. DGE responsible to Minister	Hunt-Lacy Review	Report of Parliamentary Select Committee on Education (Ahern)		Departmental Reorganisation			N.T. Leg Assembly assumes responsibility for education
1980	Education Commission Act 1980	White paper on Strategic & Structure for Education In Victoria Gov. schools						
1981		PA Report-Rationale & Definition of proposed Organisation structure Education (Amendment) Act, 1981		Into the 80s-Our Schools & their Purposes		White paper on Schools & Colleges		P.A. Review Commissioner for Teaching appointed
1982				Education & Change in Sch Aust (Keeves Report)		Review of the Efficiency & Effectiveness of Education Department (Hughes)		
1983		Decision Making in Victorian Education-devolution principles					Challenge of Change-Review of High Schools (Steinle)	Directions for the 80's
1984		Establishment of State Board of Education	Education 2000 Review commenced	Administrative Reorganisation (area offices) (1983-86) Public Service Review	Report of the Committee of Enquiry into Education in WA (Beazley)			Commissioner for Teaching abolished
1985	Future Directions of Secondary Education (Swann/McKinnon)	Creation of Ministry of Education & position of Chief Executive Officer, min. Review of Post Compulsory Schooling (Blackburn)	Education 2000 Report					Review and Reorganisation of Education Dept. High Schools and Secondary Colleges in the N.T.
1986		Ministry Structures Project team report Taking Schools into the 90s	Report of Committee of Review-Education 2000 Submission		Managing Change in the Public Sector	Secondary Education: The Future		
1987	Education and Public Instruction Act, 1987	The Structure and Organisation of the Schools Division	Public Sector Review Meeting the Challenge	Review of Personnel Policies & Practices (Yerbury)	Better Schools in WA Report			Towards the 90's Excellence, Accountability & Devolution
1988	Education Commission terminated. Management Review (Scott) Curriculum Review (Carrick)		Separation of TAFE from Education Department	Enquiry into Post -Compulsory Education (Gilding) Primary Education Review (Gilbertson)			Management Review of ACT Schools Authority (Berkley/Kenway)	Towards the 90's Vol 2
1989	Schools Renewal Department of School Education			Education Review Unit established			Chief Executive Officer vested with functions of Council. Community Schools for Canberra 1989-2000	Teaching in Tomorrows Territory
1990	School Centred Education. Education Reform Act	Abolition of Regional Boards?Staffing reductions	Focus on Schools Report			Review of Dept. of Education and the Arts (CRESAP)	Self Government in ACT-Ministry for Health, Education & Arts	
1991	Further Restructuring of Department	Dept of Education changes to Office of Schools Administration	Reorganisation of Departmental Structures			Draft Policy on School Self Management	Education Plan for ACT, 1991-1993	Public Sector Review of Expenditure

Based on Restructuring Education in Australia - Harman (1991, p. 74).

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Appendix 2 Items within each factor

Factor 1: Principal as Nexus
Principal prepared to learn new ideas, approaches
Principal keeping up to date with new teaching methods
Principal actively involved in the curriculum development activities of the school
Two-way channels of communication with all staff
Maintaining high expectations of staff
Providing feedback to staff members
Two way channels of communication with students
Principal acting as a role model
Degree of trust between principal/deputy principal and other members of staff
Two-way channels of communication with parents
Recognizing the uniqueness of each school community
Fostering the professional growth of staff members
The ability of the principal to declare a personal set of goals for the school
Improving the work of staff members
Maintaining an open school climate

Factor 2: Cooperative Improvement-Oriented Staff
Staff keeping up to date with new teaching methods
A decision-making policy that is in operation
Staff who display a high level of motivation to their work
High staff morale
Teachers engaged in personal professional development activities
Teachers engaged in school-focussed professional development activities
for the improvement of the school
Staff displaying commitment to the school
Job satisfaction of individual staff members
Teachers willing to consider change

Factor 3: Student Centeredness
Student progress and attainment is reported to the parents
High student morale
A reward structure that acknowledges the efforts and achievements of students
A student behavior management program
High student satisfaction with the school
Monitoring of student progress and attainment with feedback to the students

Factor 4: Facilities and Financial Management
Well-maintained school grounds and facilities
School budget developed with all staff and parents
School internal environment that indicates care and attention to detail

Factor 5: Goal Emphasis
Joint principal-staff planning to accomplish school goals
School goals set cooperatively with staff and parents

Factor 6: Parental Support
Enlisting support of parent bodies
Clarifying the educational program to the parents

Factor 7: Academic Program Focus
The development of social skills is emphasized
The development of student creativity is emphasized
Coordination of the continuity of the instructional program